

A Look at Amish Tradition and Culture Through Prose and Photographs

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Thesis advisor
Dr. Linda Pohlman

A handwritten signature in cursive script, likely belonging to Linda Pohlman, the thesis advisor. The signature is written in black ink and features a long, horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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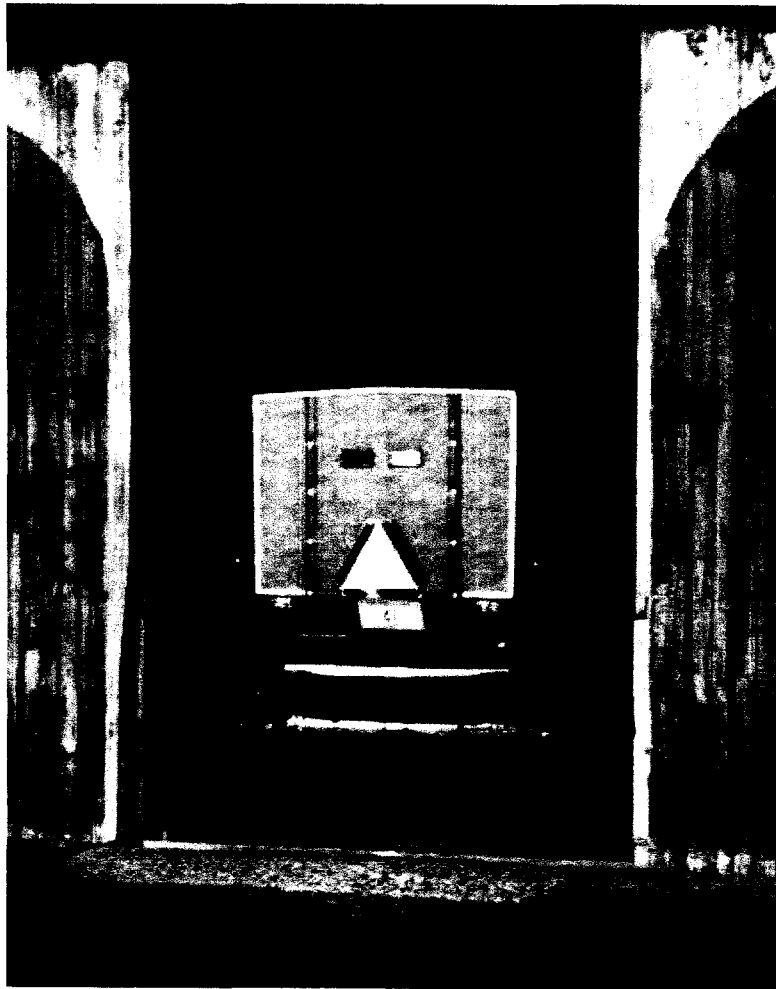
Abstract

My examination of Amish Tradition and Culture stemmed from several conversations I had with students at Burris Laboratory School. Many of the students at the school did not have much knowledge of Amish life and what knowledge they did have was full of misconceptions about Amish life. I grew up in Northern Indiana, but I had never explored the Amish culture very deeply. I decided to take my love for children and photography and combine them to create an educational children's book on the Amish. I met with an Amish family and read several books on Amish life. I also took pictures of many Amish items while meeting with the Amish family. They would only let me take one picture of their children because they do not believe that they should be photographed. After developing the pictures I scanned the photographs into the computer and merged my text with the pictures. Using information from these sources, I came up with my children's book called Amish Traditions and Culture. After completing the book, I randomly had several children, adults, and others read the book. They then completed a survey that I created in order to analyze the worth of my book. The surveys are also included in this thesis along with my final analysis of my book. I wanted my book to be informative, interesting, and truthful. I believe that I did this, but I believe my book may be too difficult for a child to read on his/her own, so his/her parent must guide the child when reading the book.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Dr. Linda Pohlabel, my thesis advisor, who took time out of her busy schedule to offer suggestions, analyze, and help me create my final project at Ball State University. It was her enthusiasm for teaching reading that helped me come up with the idea to write a children's book in the first place. Also many thanks go out to the Johnny Yoder family for letting me take an inside peek at what Amish life is like. Without your help and time, I would not have been able to create such an informative book.

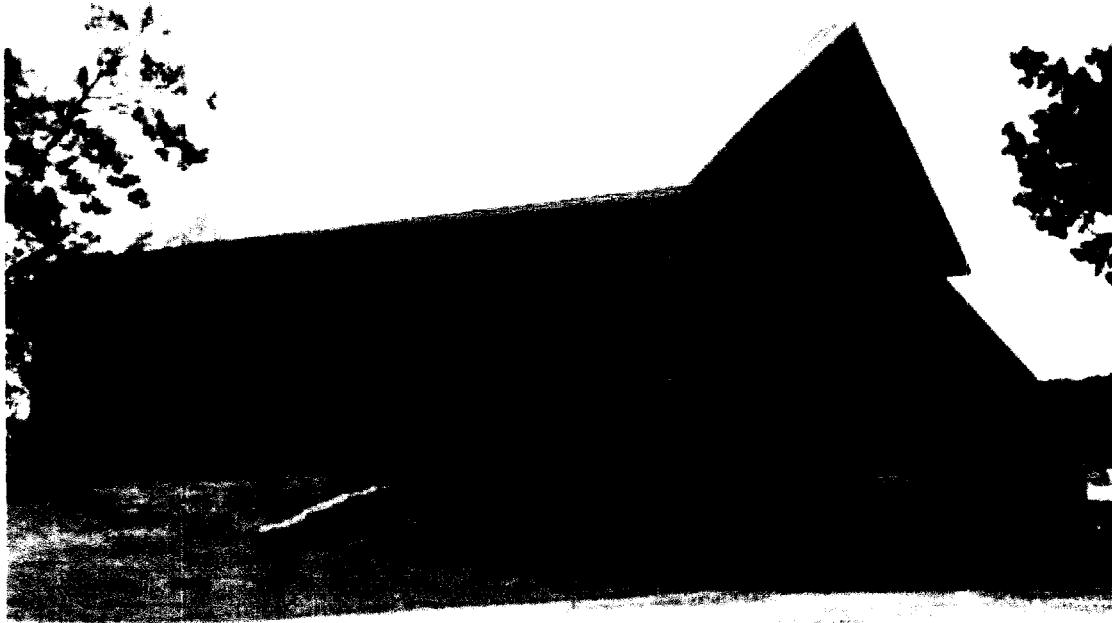
Amish Heritage and Culture



Written by Brenda Garber



Hi! My name is Eileen. I am a ten year old Amish girl who lives in Northern Indiana. I am going to tell you about my Amish heritage. Many people are confused by our way of life, so I am going to clear up some things for you.



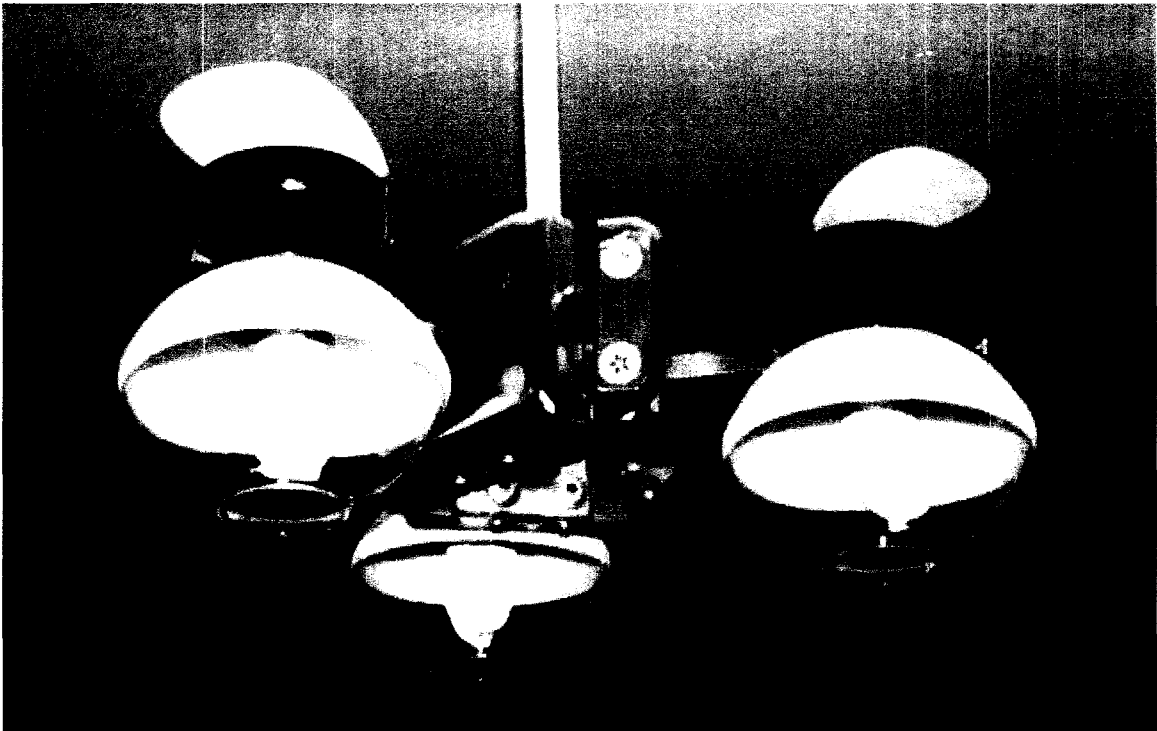
Our lifestyle is not that different from other lifestyles. Our lives differ in that we do not have electricity, telephones or cars. We can still ride in cars, go to places with electricity and borrow a telephone during a time of need, but these are items that we do not keep on our property or own.

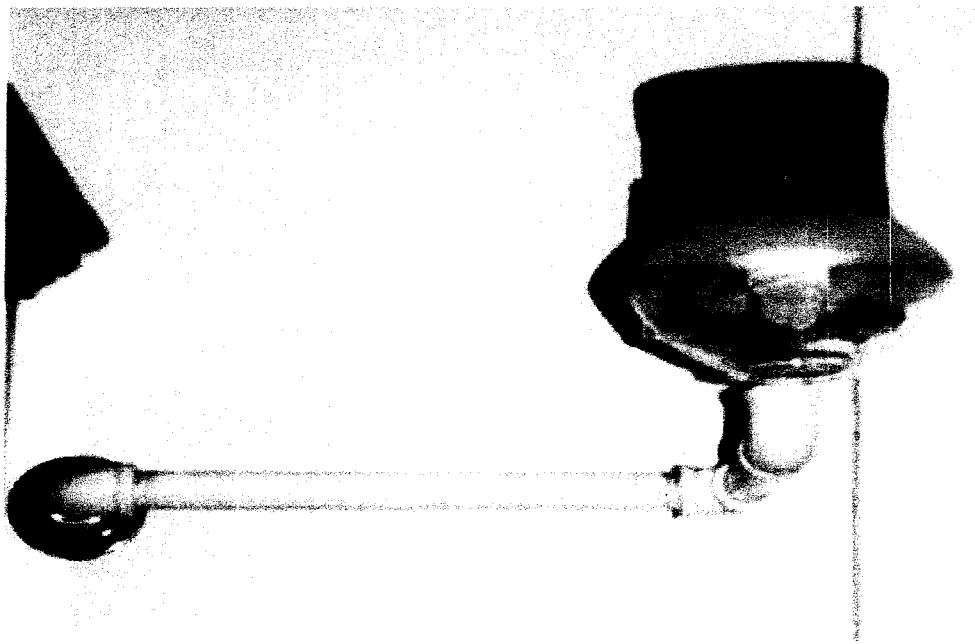
First, let me explain to you why there is only one picture of me. Amish do not believe in having photographs taken of us. It goes against our religion: The Bible says, “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath or that is in the water under the earth:” (Exodus 20:4 KJV). This means that nothing should be above God. By taking photographs of ourselves, we believe that we are placing ourselves above God. We are allowed to have pictures taken of our household items, so there are plenty of pictures in this book.



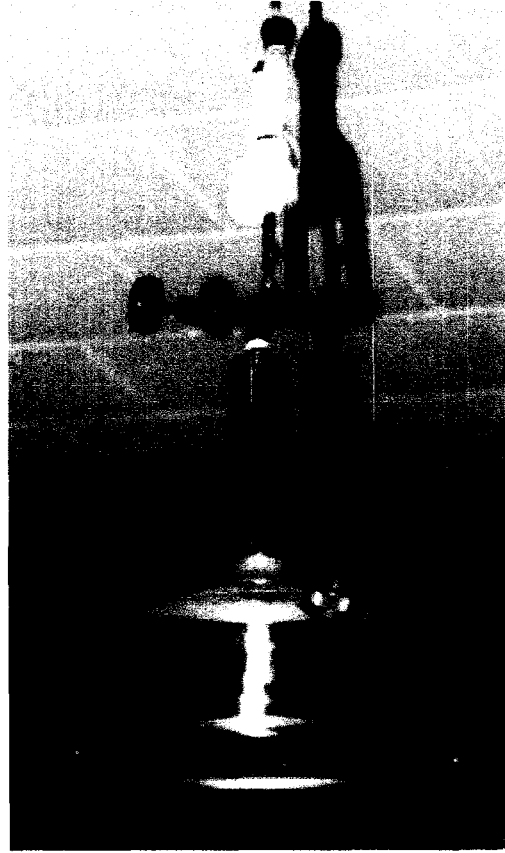
This is my house. I have lived here my entire life. My house is no different from your house. We have a refrigerator, kitchen sink, bathroom, stove and lights. Everything in our house runs on gas instead of electricity.

We light our house with gas-powered lamps. Our lights have switches on them, which let the gas into the lamps and then you light them with a match. The gas comes in from a pipe, down to the light, and then powers the light. On the light shown here, all three lamps can be lit at once or individually. This is nice so you do not have to have them all lit at the same time.

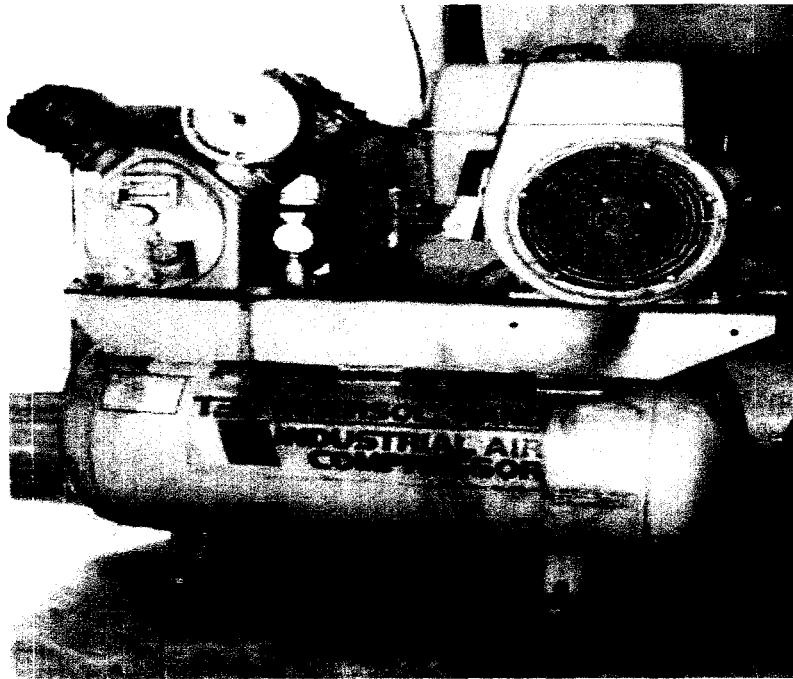




This light shows you how the gas comes in from the house. You can see the pipe as it travels from the wall to the lamp. This light is mounted on the wall in our house. There are many of these throughout our home.



These two lamps have their own holding tanks for the gas. The bottom container that hangs down is where the gas is kept. The gas then powers these lamps. All you have to do is turn the gas on and light the lamp with a match. They work much like a lantern.

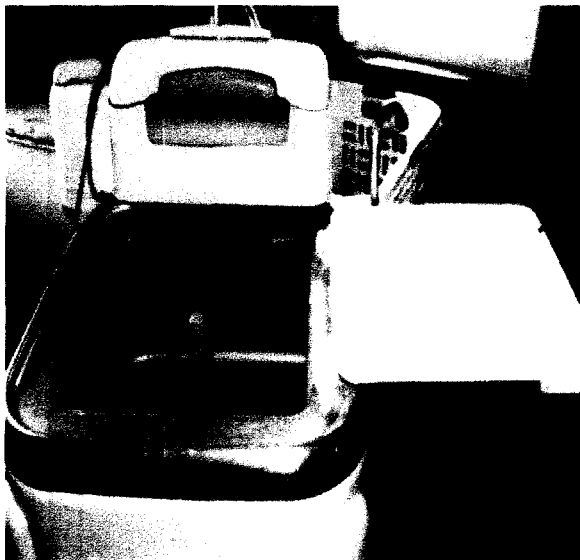


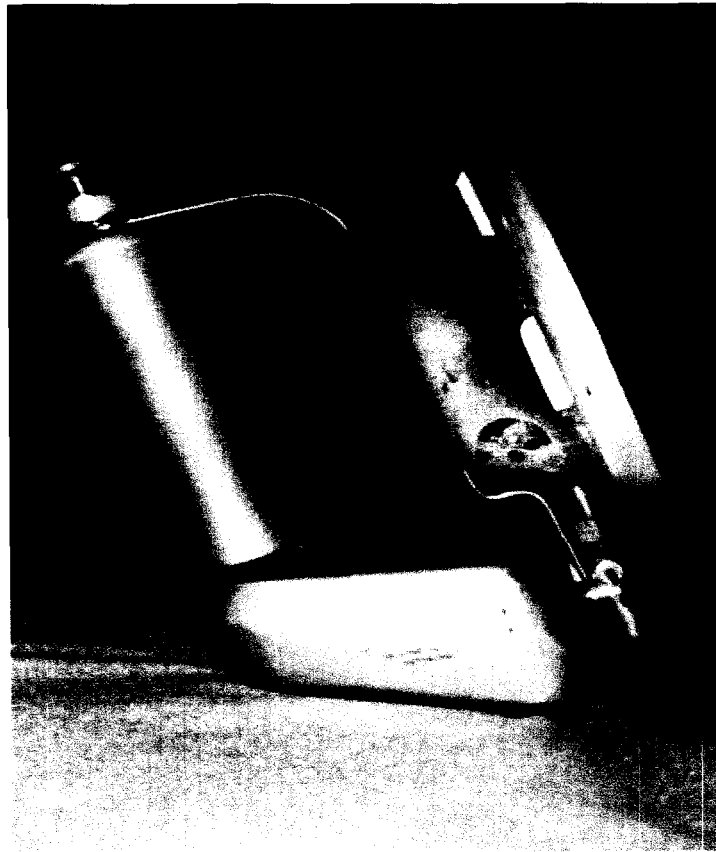
Many people believe that we have to heat our hot water on the stove, but it comes into our house already heated. First, we have a gas tank, which runs the air compressor. Then the air compressor releases air into the water tank to push the water to a water heater, which heats the water. The water is then pushed into the house, so we can take hot showers and have hot water.

Our bathroom is what amazes most people. Our bathroom has a regular shower, similar to what you would have in your house. We also have a toilet that flushes and two sinks in our bathroom. Our bathroom is very modern. Cleanliness is very important to us, so we shower daily.



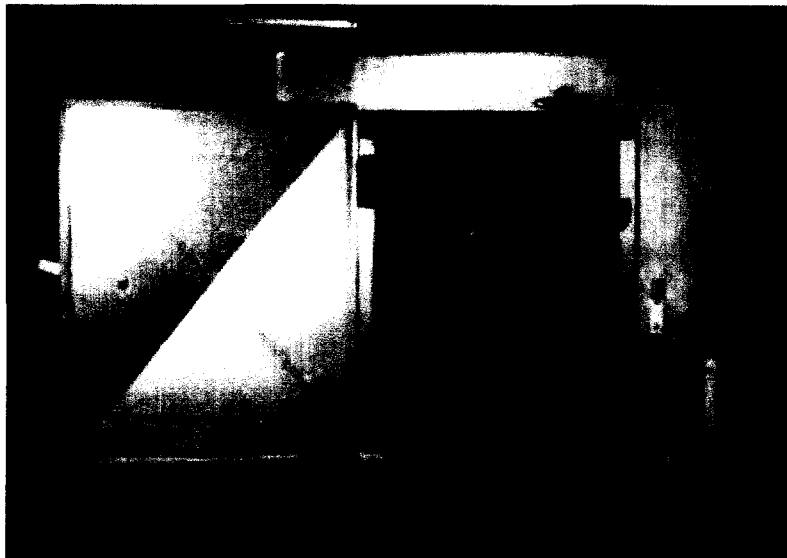
We have a washing machine to wash our clothes. It too is run by gas. As you can see, the inside looks very similar to your washing machine. The only difference is that we have a wringer to wring the clothes, instead of spinning most of the water off them. The wringer is the part of the machine that sets up higher than the lid. We do not have a dryer. We line dry our clothes. In the winter, we hang our clothes in the basement to dry.



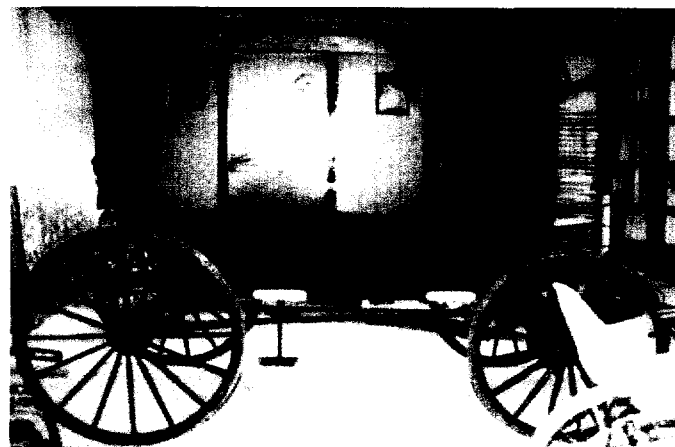
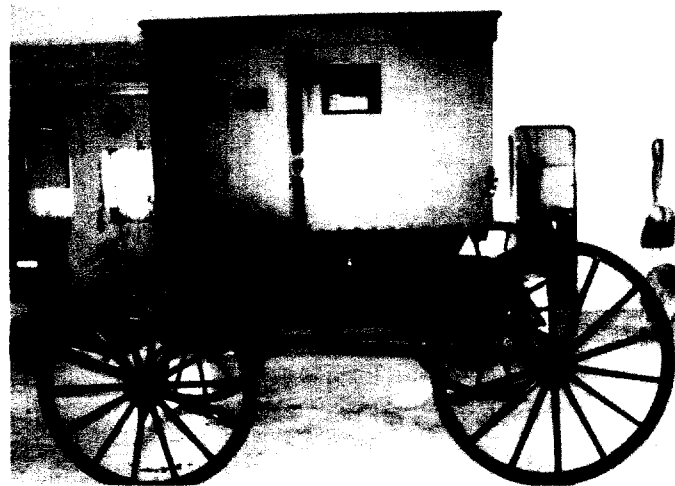


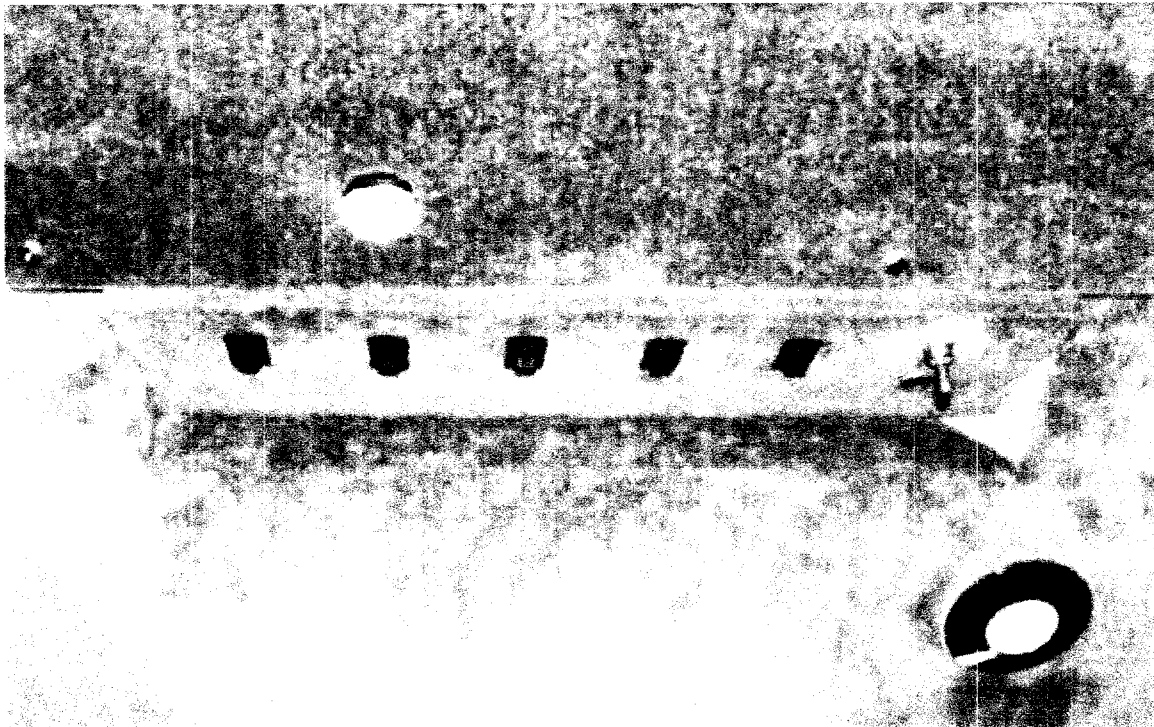
Our iron probably looks very different from yours. It has a small gas holding tank. Once you light the pilot light the gas heats the iron and you can iron your clothing. It looks very heavy, but it is not any heavier than the iron you use at home. I have been ironing since the age of six, and I do not find it very difficult at all.

Since we use gas for everything else in our house, it would seem like we would use it to heat our house, but this is not true. We use a coal stove to heat our house. It is very similar to a wood stove. Coal is a cheap way to heat your home, but it also creates extra black dust in the house. We have a filter over the coal stove, but some of the soot from the coal still escapes. The coal is stored in our basement near the coal stove in the winter. Several Amish families buy a bunch of coal at once and then split it up to reduce the cost.

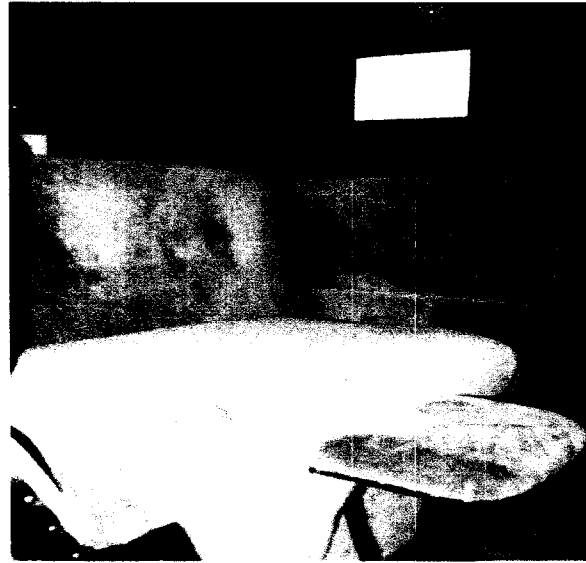
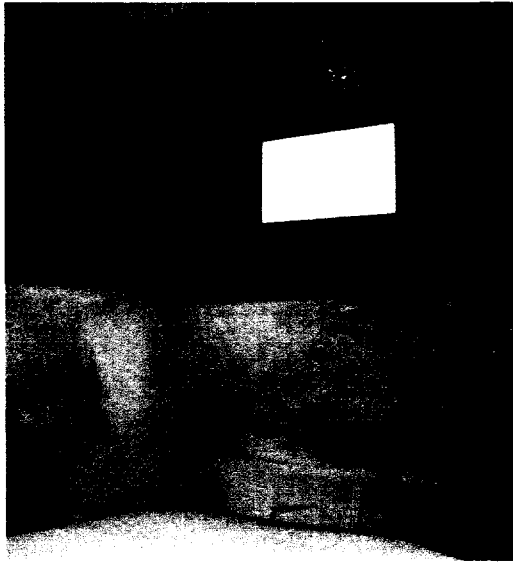


That is basically everything that is in my house. Now I would like to show you my mode of transportation. Our buggies are very fun. There are single and double buggies. Single buggies have one door on each side, and double buggies have two doors on each side.





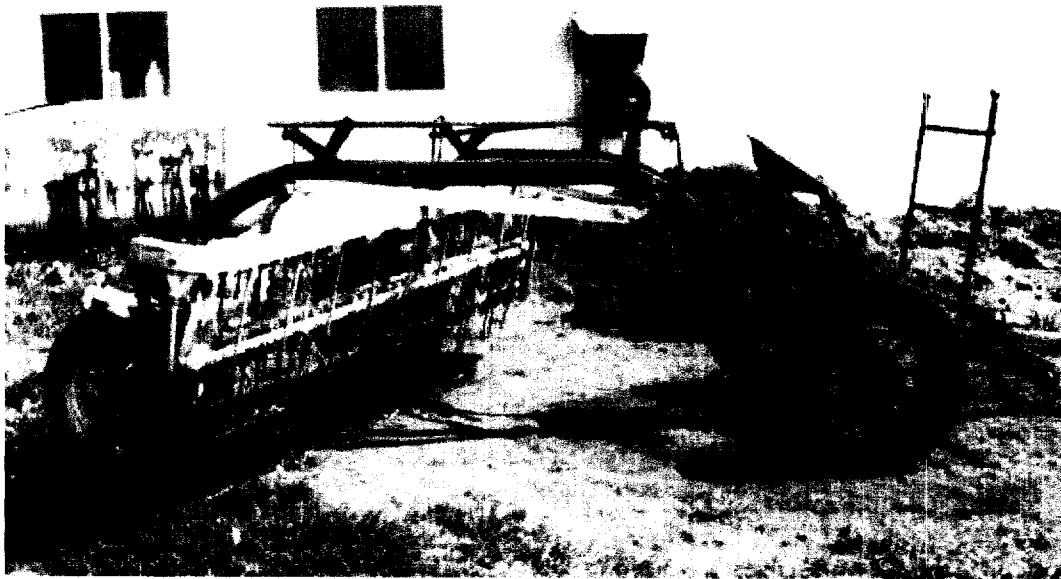
The inside of our buggy is very fancy. The switches shown here control the lights inside and out. It is required that we have reflectors and lights on our buggies. This is to protect others and ourselves from harm. Most buggies now have turn signals for safety sake as well.



In these two pictures, you can see a clock on the wall of the buggy. This lets us know what time it is when we are out and about. The inside of our buggy is usually made with velvet. The inside is very soft and comfortable. There is a small stool sticking out from the seat in the second picture. This seat is big enough for a small child to fit. I am too big for it now. This extra seat makes a two-person buggy into a three or possibly four person buggy.

We usually begin driving the buggy around the age of 13. This differs from family to family depending on the child's maturity level. There is no law stating at what age we can or cannot drive. If you have a good horse, it is not too difficult to drive a buggy. In this way, we are very lucky. You have to wait until you are 16 to drive a car, but we are allowed to drive whenever our parents decide to let us.

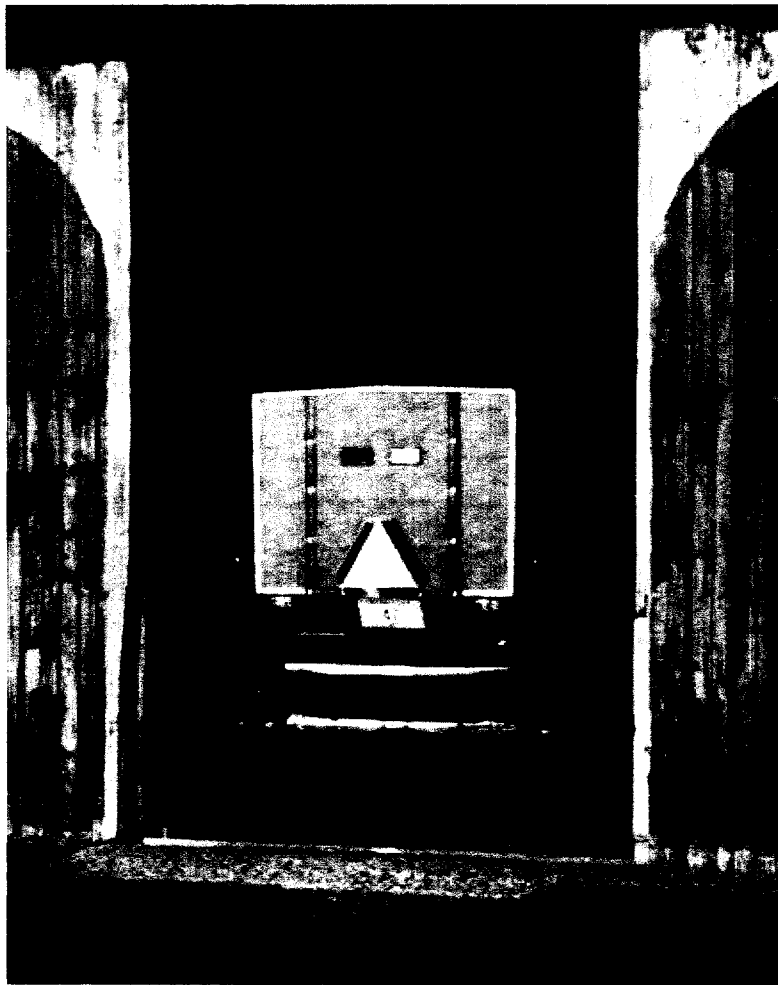
Finally, I would like to show you what my father does. He farms the land. This is his hay rake, which he uses to rake hay. He hooks the horses up to it and they pull him and the hay rake across the land. Most Amish cannot afford to live by farming alone. They need a supplemental income. Approximately 6% of Amish families have only the farm as income, the others cannot survive on this income alone. Many Amish work in factories or do construction work. In today's society it is very hard to make it as a farmer, so we make do with what we can.





Another interesting thing in my life is that we only have church every other week. This is so we can visit other communities when our community is not having church. Church is held at the homes of people in the congregation. Church is at our house approximately once a year. We have around 30 families in our congregation. We only attend church 26 weeks out of the year. Church lasts from 9:00 to 11:45. A church lunch follows. This is a great time because we have lots of good food. The family who holds church provides the food for everyone else. After lunch the adults visit and kids play volleyball or kickball.

As Amish we wish to preserve our heritage, while at the same time we recognize that times do change and that we must change with them. The main cornerstone we hold true to is our faith in God.



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Amish Tradition and Culture

Please fill out all information.

Name: _____

Date: _____

Age: _____

Please circle your answers.

1. Did you enjoy the book? Yes No
2. Would you read this book again? Yes No
3. Would you suggest this book to others? Yes No
4. Was this book informative? Yes No
5. Was this book entertaining? Yes No
6. Did the photographs enhance the story? Yes No

Suggestions

Did this book leave you with any unanswered questions? If yes, please explain.

What else would you have wanted to know about Amish traditions or culture

How could this book be improved?

Amish Tradition and Culture

Please fill out all information.

Name: PETE

Date: 10-8-01

Age: 44

Please circle your answers.

1. Did you enjoy the book? ☒ Yes ☐ No
2. Would you read this book again? ☐ Yes ☒ No
3. Would you suggest this book to others? ☒ Yes ☐ No
4. Was this book informative? ☒ Yes ☐ No
5. Was this book entertaining? ☒ Yes ☐ No
6. Did the photographs enhance the story? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Suggestions

Did this book leave you with any unanswered questions? If yes, please explain.

How DO THE AMISH KEEP WARM IN THERE
BUILDINGS.

What else would you have wanted to know about Amish traditions or culture?

SOME OF THERE OTHER SOURCES THE AMISH
USE TO MAKE A LIVING BESIDES FARMING AND
FACTORY WORK.

How could this book be improved?

MORE EXAMPLES OF UNIQUE THINGS THE AMISH
DO, SUCH AS EDUCATION, DATING, ENTERTAINMENT,
ENTERTAINMENT.

Amish Tradition and Culture

Please fill out all information.

Name: Marah

Date: Oct 10 2001

Age: 10

Please circle your answers.

1. Did you enjoy the book? ☒ Yes ☐ No
2. Would you read this book again? ☒ Yes ☐ No
3. Would you suggest this book to others? ☒ Yes ☐ No
4. Was this book informative? ☒ Yes ☐ No
5. Was this book entertaining? ☒ Yes ☐ No
6. Did the photographs enhance the story? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Suggestions

Did this book leave you with any unanswered questions? If yes, please explain.

No it did not.

What else would you have wanted to know about Amish traditions or culture

are the kids allowed to talk while they eat?

How could this book be improved?

It could use a heading.

Amish Tradition and Culture

Please fill out all information.

Name: Debbie

Date: 10-10-01

Age: 44

Please circle your answers.

1. Did you enjoy the book? ☒ Yes ☐ No
2. Would you read this book again? ☒ Yes ☐ No
3. Would you suggest this book to others? ☒ Yes ☐ No
4. Was this book informative? ☒ Yes ☐ No
5. Was this book entertaining? ☒ Yes ☐ No
6. Did the photographs enhance the story? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Suggestions

Did this book leave you with any unanswered questions? If yes, please explain.

I wondered if any mommy's ever work
outside the home or do they stay at home.

What else would you have wanted to know about Amish traditions or culture

I would be interested learn much more on
the Amish way of life

How could this book be improved?

It could be longer and more detailed.
I think it was very good.

Amish Tradition and Culture

Please fill out all information.

Name: Stacey

Date: 10-16-01

Age: 16

Please circle your answers.

1. Did you enjoy the book? ☒ Yes ☐ No
2. Would you read this book again? ☒ Yes ☐ No
3. Would you suggest this book to others? ☒ Yes ☐ No
4. Was this book informative? ☒ Yes ☐ No
5. Was this book entertaining? ☒ Yes ☐ No
6. Did the photographs enhance the story? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Suggestions

Did this book leave you with any unanswered questions? If yes, please explain.

No

What else would you have wanted to know about Amish traditions or culture

I would like to know more about their family traditions. Like when ~~one~~ of the kids turn 16 then do they get to explore the not Amish ways.

How could this book be improved?

What the Amish do for fun & more pictures.
All in all the book was very good.

Amish Tradition and Culture

Please fill out all information.

Name: Cathy

Date: 10-13-01

Age: 42

Please circle your answers.

1. Did you enjoy the book? ☒ Yes ☐ No
2. Would you read this book again? ☒ Yes ☐ No
3. Would you suggest this book to others? ☒ Yes ☐ No
4. Was this book informative? ☒ Yes ☐ No
5. Was this book entertaining? ☒ Yes ☐ No
6. Did the photographs enhance the story? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Suggestions

Did this book leave you with any unanswered questions? If yes, please explain.

no

What else would you have wanted to know about Amish traditions or culture

How they prepare + preserve food.

How could this book be improved?

more pictures, more variety

Amish Tradition and Culture

Please fill out all information.

Name: Jali
Date: 10-13-01
Age: 9

Please circle your answers.

1. Did you enjoy the book? ☒ Yes ☐ No
2. Would you read this book again? ☒ Yes ☐ No
3. Would you suggest this book to others? ☒ Yes ☐ No
4. Was this book informative? ☒ Yes ☐ No
5. Was this book entertaining? ☒ Yes ☐ No
6. Did the photographs enhance the story? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Suggestions

Did this book leave you with any unanswered questions? If yes, please explain.

No

What else would you have wanted to know about Amish traditions or culture

How many people go to the church when they have it at somebodies house?

How could this book be improved?

By adding how many people go to the amish church.

Amish Tradition and Culture

Please fill out all information.

Name: Tori

Date: 10-12-01

Age: 8

Please circle your answers.

1. Did you enjoy the book? ☒ Yes ☐ No
2. Would you read this book again? ☒ Yes ☐ No
3. Would you suggest this book to others? ☒ Yes ☐ No
4. Was this book informative? ☒ Yes ☐ No
5. Was this book entertaining? ☒ Yes ☐ No
6. Did the photographs enhance the story? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Suggestions

Did this book leave you with any unanswered questions? If yes, please explain.

Were do they put there
buggy.

What else would you have wanted to know about Amish traditions or culture

Want do they do on
holidays

How could this book be improved?

nothing

Amish Tradition and Culture

Please fill out all information.

Name: Trent
Date: 10-12-01
Age: 6

Please circle your answers.

1. Did you enjoy the book? ☒ Yes ☐ No
2. Would you read this book again? ☒ Yes ☐ No
3. Would you suggest this book to others? ☒ Yes ☐ No
4. Was this book informative? ☒ Yes ☐ No
5. Was this book entertaining? ☒ Yes ☐ No
6. Did the photographs enhance the story? ☐ Yes ☒ No

Suggestions

Did this book leave you with any unanswered questions? If yes, please explain.

No

What else would you have wanted to know about Amish traditions or culture?

No

How could this book be improved?

Nothing

Amish Tradition and Culture

Please fill out all information.

Name: Q am

Date: 10-10-01

Age: 10

Please circle your answers.

1. Did you enjoy the book? ☒ Yes ☐ No
2. Would you read this book again? ☒ Yes ☐ No
3. Would you suggest this book to others? ☒ Yes ☐ No
4. Was this book informative? ☒ Yes ☐ No
5. Was this book entertaining? ☒ Yes ☐ No
6. Did the photographs enhance the story? ☒ Yes ☐ No

Suggestions

Did this book leave you with any unanswered questions? If yes, please explain.

No

What else would you have wanted to know about Amish traditions or culture

What do they do for fun

How could this book be improved?

stop the pictures from bleeding through

Final Analysis

I surveyed people ranging from age 6 to age 44. The results from this survey were very similar because almost all of the people surveyed enjoyed this book, found it informative, would read it again and would suggest it to others. I was surprised by the range of questions that people had about Amish life. It was very interesting to read what other information people wanted to know about Amish lifestyle. If I were to undertake a project like this again I would first pass out a survey to see what information people wanted to know about Amish and then do research based on this information. Also I would try to gear the book more toward older students. After analyzing my book further I realized that this is a book that is more appropriate for upper elementary due to the content of the book. When I first started this project I thought that I wanted my book to be geared more toward lower elementary grades, but as time went on and my book developed, I realized that upper elementary students would get more out of this book. I am very pleased with the results of my book. I feel that I accomplished all my goals and learned a lot about Amish traditions and culture. Because I actually sat down with an Amish family and discussed their lifestyle, traditions, religion and culture I was able to better understand exactly what Amish life is like. I believe that this is truly a cumulating project for me because I took a background from which I grew up around and combined it with my love for children and photography. By completing this project I was able to merge college life with my hometown life. This gives me great satisfaction.